

Accession Number A/5

Classification

Date: 2 May 1974 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Place: Evanston 1821 Laurel

Interview with: Mrs. Henrietta Taylor

Interviewed by: S.F. Patton

Observations: Interview held in private home of Mrs. Taylor. She was quite cooperative. Again, interview objective was to learn about Black American occupations, particularly to learn about the horse and carriage business her uncle owned. She is 80 years old on Aug. 19 1973 and suffered a stroke which affected her memory. The following response commenced without by formally asking the usual questions of name, date of birth, etc.

1 A. All my family was Catholic. My grandmother had eleven children, all christened at St. Nicholas Church at Main and Ridge Ave. She was Catholic, she was born in Bremen, Germany; she was White. My grandfather was also from there. Some of my grandmother's children married into White; some married into Black.

Priscilla, my daughter had two marriages. Her first husband was an undertaker, John Davis; he was in charge at the Rayner Funeral Home. He died. Her second husband, Edward Hardcastle, that marriage ended in divorce. My daughter was one of the first Black W.A.C.; she became corporal. She suffered a stroke then she couldn't remember well. She suffered a stroke before I did. You know you have to remember things for the Government so they gave her an honourable retirement. She was at Great Lakes, Naval Base for seventeen years. She drove everyday. She got an honourable retirement in 1969. We lived then in the 1000 block Sherman

As I said, my grandmother was White. Her father was a brewer and baker in Germany. He had two girls and two boys. Her parents were in Germany. She came with her father and mother from Germany. My grandmother's sister became a nun and stayed in Europe (she drew my attention to a nun doll someone---she did not say who---gave her recently). My grandmother and her mother and father came on a sailboat, right after the Franco-Prussian war around 1600. There were no steamships then. They came to the New World, the Land of Opportunity. It took 60 days to cross the ocean. They finally settled in Milwaukee. You know, Milwaukee was the brewers capital of the world, and her father was a brewer so he came to Milwaukee

My grandfather's mother was an Indian Squaw. He is of

the Butler family. Benjamin Hope Butler was a big man in the State of Virginia. I know he wasn't colored.

Gradually people settled here. In the Chicago area. In 1893 there was the Chicago Fair, that's the year I was born. A lot of people came here to see the fair, the name of it was the World Columbia Exhibition. This place was called "Heaven's town" At first a lot of Whites settled here, it was beautiful countryside then; near the lake. There was James Patten, a wheat king

2 Q. Why was he called the wheat king

A. He bought all the wheat in the country. His house was on Ridge and Dempster. You can still see remains of Patten's home, the fence. The fence was of concrete with spikes driven in. They didn't have police then, they had night watchmen. They would ring the bell, every hour "It's 12 o' clock and all's well." This was another job Blacks had.

With Patten being here, a lot of people came. Evanston was like country living. The White's kept their businesses in Chicago. A lot of coloured people went into the catering business.

On Hinman and Grove, was the Country Club, there were tennis courts. This brought the aristocratic Whites and they needed "help." People came for washing and ironing. My mother was a wash woman. She wouldn't go to school like the rest of the family. Edward McKuan is my father's name. My mother's name is Lizzie Butler. She was sister to Sarah. (almost immediately photos were shown of the family, one of them was Aunt Sarah).

My mother's name then became Lizzie Butler McKuan. My grandmother had six girls and 5 boys. This union of her and Benjamin Hope Butler. His mother was Indian squaw.

3 Q. Wait, let me star with you...

A. O.K. My mother is Lizzie B. McKuan. My name is Henrietta. My mother's brother, name was Henry. That was during the horse-cab days. Everything was carriage and horse-cabs. My uncle, Henry Butler had a horse-cab business.

I don't want to talk about my family, there were other important people too. There's Dr. Elizabeth Hill. Her father was James Hill, he was the first Black mail pick-up man on horse. There were two boys in that family. Dr. Elizabeth Hill and her brother, James Hill; he was a postman too.

Going back to Uncle Henry. Uncle Henry, he have them work there, some drove cabs. He needed men to take care of the horses. My uncle drove horse-carriages for the Kirk family first

4 Q. When was the business of the horse-carriages

A. It must have been about the early 1900's

5 Q. How many men did your uncle employ

A. Oh, about 25-30 men at a time. The Northwest train would leave from Kinsey St. in Chicago and stop at Davis St. He would meet the passengers when they arrived. He would have bills to maintain; people would charge their transportation. Elizabeth Hill worked at the business at nights. I worked there during the day. We would have to make out the bills and mail them out on the first of the month. We would begin to write up the bills on the fifteenth.

There was a Scots woman, from Edinborough, a nurse who came to America. Blacks didn't have those jobs, they worked in the kitchen; their speech wasn't good. The rich Whites sent for nurses, some from Europe. The Scot woman's name was Margaret Fisher; she worked for rich White people. She met my uncle at the Kirk's family. They both went into business together. She's white. She took care of the business---the horse-carriage business. Some say she was my uncle's girlfriend, but he denied it. She lived on Judson.

My uncle had lots of property in Evanston. His wife was from someplace in the South, she was coloured, but she looked whiter than any of us. She and the woman who raised her came here and lived on the 300 block of Dempster.

Henry lived on 327 Dempster. There was the Claridge Apts., a men's club. He bought property from Judson Ave. to Dempster street (300 block); he bought down to the Claridge Apts.

Grandfather bought a lot of property in south Evanston. 1031 Sherman, grandfather built house for my grandmother. You know a lot of people weren't educated but they had sense; they knew what to do. My grandfather was a builder, he built three houses, one for my grandmother, aunt and mother.

My grandfather was in the Civil War. Ben Butler married my grandmother, he was the son of Benjamin Hope Butler who had married the Indian Squaw.

6 Q. Ben Butler was a builder, contractor

A. No, he just built them and kept them up. He fought on the side of the North. None of the family was in slavery

7 Q. How long did Uncle Henry have the business

A. Until ten years ago, he had put money in Fords. You know some people buy Cadillacs, big cars. Uncle Henry felt the

Ford was a reliable car. He had his own blacksmiths. He had 25 to 30 horses. Many Blacks got into business; they weren't skilled. They didn't know how to fix cars then.

William John Russell. My cousin married him. My uncle wanted him to run the business; he turned the business over to William J. Russell. I think it is because my cousin's husband like my uncle, didn't drink, gamble, curse; he didn't carouse

8 Q. When did he hand over the business

A. Around 15 years ago

9 Q. Around 1950

A. I believe so. My grandmother, I said earlier had six girls and five boys. One was Joe Butler; he married a Canadian. Three uncles married back into White. My mother and Sarah married Black. My grandmother's children: Joseph, Henry, Theodore Ben and Charlie. All were in the cab business. Charlie, he is the baby, he was the lazy one. Charlie married White. His wife was a nurse in Evanston, she worked for Whites. That's how they met. Joseph had 2 sons. They opened a business on Railroad Ave., 1900 block. They opened a grocery store

10 Q. When was this

A. About 1900's. You know, mother, Ben and Charlie were mentioned in Uncle Henry's will. Mother died before uncle Henry therefore I should get money. There was some contest about it in court.

11 Q. Did Joseph marry White

A. He married White, yes. The boys married into White; the girls married Black. My father was a waiter/cook for Northwestern Railroad run to Milwaukee

12 Q. Did your Mother work

A. She washed clothes; and I used to help her. Linen was mad in Ireland. They only had cotton here. The rich Whites would get orders from Ireland. I would wash those beautiful linen napkins, they were 24" square. We didn't have machines then. We would wash by hand.

13 Q. How much did one earn then

A. \$6 a day. No carfare. There was nothing to ride. The farthest north the street car came was Main St. When my

grandfather died my grandmother received \$7 a month pension. This was 1900 and something. I stayed with my grandmother. I couldn't walk then I had St Vitus. I went to Central school on Main St., Main and Sherman. Evanston High School was on Dempster

14 Q. Were there many Negroes at Evanston High School

A. People came to work. They didn't have families. A lot of time they wanted single help. Married people were less dependable, if there was trouble at home they might not come. Also money was scarce. Whites didn't want married women. Often married men would drink their money up. In later years there were saloons along Church Street called "Blind Pigs."

15 Q. Why didn't the Whites want married men

A. Those married to White didn't have a problem. My uncle Charlie would collect rents from the buildings in south Evanston. Uncle Henry had accounts in Northern Trust Bank. Mr Galderman was a lawyer for the probate court. Uncle Henry had money for heirs we couldn't find; there was a missing heir fund of around \$6000. Later we asked about the money and the lawyer claimed he didn't know anything about it. I was a dressmaker all my life.

16 Q. When did you learn to sew

A. My Aunt Emma, lived in a house. My grandfather built it. She was an invalid, then she had rheumatism. She taught me to sew. You know, the patchwork quilt and the "feather stitch" along the the edges. I worked for a pattern maker. I lived on 43rd St. for a while.

17 Q. You lived on 43rd St.

A. Yes, I lived on 43rd St. in Chicago when I married my husband. He was drafted into W. W. I. He was stationed at Camp Grant.

18 Q. Where is Camp Grant

A. Rockford, Illinois. I had two children; a son, Kenneth and a daughter named Priscilla

19 Q. When did you get married

A. Let's see. 1915

20 Q. You moved to 43rd soon after you married in 1915

A. Yes. We lived in my uncle's house first...My husband's

people lived in Racine, Wisconsin. They wanted to see me and the children often. My mother never lived in Chicago.

There's a Dr. Bell Garnett, a woman who married Arthur Butler. She had a community hospital, the Butler Sanatorium. She wanted to adopt my children. I was having problems. My husband only received \$15 a month. On the weekends I would take the children to Racine. My husband had two sisters: Marie Taylor a nurse at Provident Hospital. The other worked as a secretary for a big company in Wisconsin

21 Q. Did you support yourself by sewing

A. Yes. I had a job in the factory. I operated a big power machine. I made, sewed up patterns to make a dress. The salesmen would take the dress and show it to dressshop owners and get orders for them. Then we would make up the orders. I learned how to dart, pleat, tuck, etc.

My husband didn't live long after the service. His grandmother bought a place in Chicago; he's buried in Lawndale I believe. They were from Illinois. My family is buried in Rose Hill

22 Q. When did he die

A. Can't remember. You know this stroke has affected my memory.

23 Q. Was it around 1925

A. I think so. I'm not sure

24 Q. Can you recall how much you made in the factory

A. \$15 a week. It was a Jewish factory, you know they know about sewing.

25 Q. Were there many Negroes where you worked

A. No. A lot of them wanted jobs which gave them a place to eat and sleep. 52 E. 43rd St. is where I lived when my husband left.

26 Q. How long were you working in the factory

A. I worked for about two years. I came back to Evanston. My mother was not well. 1929 Emerson is where I lived on the second floor to take care of my mother. I'd sew out in the day. I made 50¢ a day.

27 Q. Where

A. In Evanston. I worked in peoples homes. I worked for the Pettibones, the O'Brians. There was a Mrs. Jessie Polcott who had a dance school. I worked there as a maid. I would tie shoes, take care of the children. She had ballet, toe, tap and ballroom dance. She's now in a nursing home, she wonders how I'm able to continue on. I believe in positive thinking. One had to fight to get money. My granddaughter needed help to get a house on Leland. I co-signed with her and put up the money for the down payment.

28 Q. When was this

A. 1945

29 Q. Were there many Black families on or near Leland

A. It was just starting. The government allowed companies to mortgage to put in houses for poor people. All the rich people were on the east side.

People made things the way they were, they had the guts to do it. No matter, if you're Black, Blue. They had the determination.

My grandmother who was 70 at the time, would return from work, go to the store carry big packages of sugar and flour. Then she would work in the garden. What we couldn't plant we would get at the store. I figure if an old lady like that could do it and make it then anyone can.

30 Q. Did you ever hear of the National Business League or any organization of Black businessmen

A. Black business leagues were formed but they would split-up. People don't stick together

I was saying earlier. Garnett, she married A. Butler and established the Butler Sanatorium. They had two brothers. One became a dentist, Dr. Bryant, he studied in Europe to be a doctor. A lot went into medicine. There was Dr. Gatlin, Dr. Hill, Dr. Butler.

(I suspect she has grouped them all together. There is a Dr. Gatlin in Evanston now, approximate age 50's)

Evanston Hospital was mostly all White. St. Francis was for the Catholics. We didn't go. My grandmother like many, had home remedies

31 Q. Were the caterers women

A. There was Charity Davenport. They would prepare the food at home, I think. The Country Club, I mentioned earlier there was Adam Perry, the maitre d' Mrs. Cromer, she was a

marvelous organizer of foodstuffs. Her son Billy Cromer was a policeman.

32 Q. Was Charity Davenport catering after Mrs. Cromer

A. No. Charity was before Mrs. Cromer. But there was a difference. Mrs. Cromer never had a catering business, she cooked in these homes

33 Q. Is Charity Davenport deceased

A. Yes, She's been dead a long time

34 Q. Was she in business when you were in high school

Before then. One of my aunts went to a southern Baptist church. There was the First Baptist Church for Whites. Therefore the Black one was the Second Baptist Church.

35 Q. Did Davenport expand into a business with employees

A. No. She worked in her home. In those days people were cagey. Everybody for himself, the Devil for us all, as my mother used to say. After they worked hard to get where they are they didn't want other people to just walk in and take over the business.

36 Q. Were there better wages as caterers

A. It depended. They would supply the food and it would depend on what people wanted. People working inside the homes had a scaled salary; it was constant

